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SUBJECT: SECRETARY GUTIERREZ' BILATERAL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SACA

REF: A. SAN SALVADOR 2818 B. SAN SALVADOR 2787 C. SAN SALVADOR 108

1. (SBU) Summary: Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez began his October 20-21 visit to El Salvador with a friendly but businesslike meeting

2. (U) Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez began his October 20-21 visit to El Salvador with an hour-long meeting with President Elias Ar

USG

Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez
Ambassador H. Douglas Barclay
Claire Buchan, Secretary's Chief of Staff
Israel Hernandez, A/S and Director General, Commercial Service
Walter Bastian, DAS Western Hemisphere
Regional FCS Director Daniel Thompson
Economic Counselor Jessica Webster (notetaker)

GOES

President Elias Antonio (Tony) Saca
Foreign Minister Francisco Lainez
Minister of Economy Yolanda de Gavidia
Ambassador to the U.S. Rene Leon
Private Secretary Elmer Charlaix
Technical Secretary Eduardo Zablah
Vice Minister of Economy Eduardo Ayala Grimaldi
Vice Minister of Economy Blanca Imelda Jaco de Magana

3. (U) The meeting was friendly but businesslike, covering CAFTA and regional political issues. Both the Secretary and President Saca emphasized CAFTA

4. (U) President Saca reiterated El Salvador's commitment to the CAFTA-DR agreement. He expressed his confidence that CAFTA could be implemented

5. (U) Saca focused his comments on CAFTA-DR on the political message of the Secretary's meeting with Central American Presidents. He said that

6. (SBU) Without CAFTA, Saca said, the outlook for the region would be difficult. He was very concerned with the trend in Latin America to

7. (SBU) Saca explained that there were historical and continuing reasons (including the large Salvadoran population in the United States) for

8. (U) The President commented that the GOES would announce within days the establishment of a Code of Ethics for government employees, drawing VENEZUELA AND OIL POLITICS

9. (SBU) Saca called Venezuela's Chavez a "headache for Latin America," but also said that Chavez was the most important issue for the region

10. (SBU) Saca commented that high world oil prices allowed Chavez to position himself as the "good guy"; without high oil prices, Chavez would NICARAGUA

11. (SBU) Saca expressed concern about political conditions in Nicaragua and the strength of Aleman's PLC and Ortega's FSLN parties. He suggested IRAQ

12. (SBU) Saca said it would be a good sign if the people of Iraq approved the draft Constitution put to a vote last weekend. He said that REGIONAL INTEGRATION

13. (U) The Secretary asked about progress in harmonizing border crossing issues with neighboring countries, noting that consistency in customs CONTAINER SECURITY INITIATIVE

14. (U) Ambassador Rene Leon asked for the Secretary's help in getting El Salvador into the Customs and Border Patrol's Container Security Initiative

15. (U) This cable was cleared by the delegation.
Barclay